

## **HOMELESS GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HGAP) SPRING 2008 AWARD PROJECT DOCUMENTATION**

### **Island County – Project Home Base**

Island County Human Services Dept.  
PO Box 5000  
Coupeville, WA 98239  
Jackie Henderson, Human Services Director  
360-678-7881

### **CONTEXT**

Island County stakeholders and human services providers have seen a need for housing for people coming out of jail and prison or inpatient mental health or chemical dependency treatment for years, as private landlords and existing housing providers would not take them. Local law enforcement saw people revolving through the corrections system, individuals who these law enforcement stakeholders thought could make it on the outside with a little help.

Island County has no emergency shelter. Over the last 10 years, more transitional housing has been made available for women with children, but there is still not much available for men. The most recent County Point in Time count found 87 homeless people, which likely underreports the homeless population considerably, as it omits “couch surfers” and people who are inadequately housed. These types of non-street homelessness (six people in a two-bed trailer, or a family shut up in a barn) are prevalent in Island County. Some people camp or live in motor homes that must be moved; the County Homeless Housing Task Force hears about a large number of people in housing need through schools and teen organizations.

Many homeless people go to Everett or Seattle to seek assistance, but the Home Base program was particularly needed for people who can’t leave, because of their criminal justice supervision reporting requirements or because they have recovery support in Island County.

This challenge is reflected in the County’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, which was developed by the Homeless Housing Task Force (also responsible for the County’s Continuum of Care submissions) and released in December 2005. The Task Force was at that time facilitated by the Housing Authority, but that responsibility is now transitioning to the Human Services Department (HSD).

### **PROJECT HISTORY**

The County initially applied for HGAP funding in 2007 for Project Home Base, but was not successful until revising its proposal and reapplying in 2008. The specifics of the project were developed by an advisory committee, including representatives from the Housing Authority of Island County, the Opportunity Council, the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Island County Drug Court, the Washington

## **HOMELESS GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HGAP) SPRING 2008 AWARD PROJECT DOCUMENTATION**

Department of Corrections Community Corrections Division, and the Island County Sheriff's Department.

This committee meets monthly for about an hour to oversee the project, in consultation with other project partners and referring organizations, including the Island County Jail Transition Program, Compass Health, Citizens Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse, Whidbey General Hospital, the Oak Harbor Police Department, and the new local family treatment court, which has referred one client since its debut in January 2009.

Island County did not base Home Base on a particular model, though some Homeless Housing Task Force members were aware of a range of promising practices in homeless programs and integrated those principles into the project design. The Task Force knew the need would be larger than they could serve with a single program, and chose a project scope they thought the County could do well. They now think they might be able to serve a few more people than previously expected, because of efficiencies created out of good partnerships.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITY**

HSD signed an HGAP contract in October 2008, and hired a Project Home Base case manager who began work in December. They chose a veteran social worker with experience working with street homeless people, who had gained transferable risk assessment and client matching skills by managing foster home placements.

The case manager took time to determine Project Home Base's screening process and to meet with property managers, and made an initial placement into a 2BR unit in January. Currently, five people are receiving housing assistance through the program, which has expanded to include three 2BR units and one 1BR unit, for individuals who are hard to match. One client had been sleeping outside prior to jail, from which he was referred.

### **OUTCOMES AND PROGRESS**

The Project Home Base case manager has met with the local Law and Justice Committee; diverse providers, including the adult drug court judge, praised the Home Base program for the effectiveness of its intensive case management.

So far, Home Base has been able to serve all eligible referrals with housing for six months or up to a year as needed to ensure lasting client stabilization. This length of time is critical for some clients (for example, those whose involvement in drug court requires many hours of treatment or other appointments that prevent them from immediately finding work).

## **HOMELESS GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HGAP) SPRING 2008 AWARD PROJECT DOCUMENTATION**

The program has also received some referrals for people who were ineligible; for instance, because individuals were hospitalized for medical (not mental health) reasons that the program was not equipped to serve. The program case manager has found that mental health and addiction patients do not live well together, so they are matched (rather than intermingled) within housing.

The Department of Corrections has adjusted to refer candidates with a better chance of success than previously referred, potentially violent people. The program has had one success with an offender with a 20-year-old high-risk conviction and a newer offense; this client has been able to find a job and begin paying almost full rent.

Project Home Base administrators credit their degree of success to a highly cooperative property manager, who owns or manages lots of property in Island County. They also have a very good partnership with the Island County Housing Authority, which has a lot of strong landlord relationships.

On advice from partners, including the Opportunity Council (which operates family shelter programming in Island County), Project Home Base has incorporated into written agreements with tenants a section allowing the Home Base case manager to walk in at any time. Though Project Home Base seeks not to overuse this right, some clients need this support.

The project does not yet keep a waiting list, but has sought to stagger participant move-in so the staff can accommodate each person.

### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

2005	State Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act (2163) passed
December 2005	Island County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness completed
September 2007	Island County submits initial HGAP application for Project Home Base
January 2008	HGAP releases 2008 HGAP RFP
April 2008	Island County submits revised application for Project Home Base
June 2008	CTED announces conditional funding of \$630K for Island County Home Base
December 2008	Project Home Base case manager hired
January 2009	First clients enrolled and moved in
February 2009	Five clients enrolled; three 2BR and one 1BR units leased